



# ukulele player

## New Magazine for Ukulele Players and Enthusiasts

If you are reading this, you have probably already discovered the joy and entertainment value of the ukulele.

In the past several years there have been a growing number of people buying their first ukulele with the intent of learning to play. Many of them played other instruments previously. Many were guitarists first and took up the uke for a host of reasons.

Some ukulele enthusiasts were music lovers that always wanted to play an instrument but found the guitar was difficult and a piano was just too big and heavy to move. A soprano ukulele is so small and lightweight that you can carry one anywhere. With just four strings, the uke is easy to play and is surprisingly versatile.

**ukulele player** is dedicated to you, the ukulele player. You don't have to be a pro. You don't have to be a recording artist. You don't have to belong to a club, but if you hope to learn and play music with other people, then this magazine is for you.

Within **ukulele player** we will feature news and information about the ukulele world. We will bring you articles about celebrities in the community of ukulele players, up and coming individuals with star potential, and collectors or just ukulele afficiendos that have become known in chat boards and ukulele blogs on the Internet.

**ukulele player** will also feature product reviews and we'll provide you with news and information from the industry. We'll interview some of the shakers and movers in the world of luthiers and do profiles of some hobbiest turned pro. We'll also provide how-to articles on recording songs and even songwriting.

In the way of useful information, we plan to publish lists of clubs around the globe and provide you with contact information to

help you find a club in your area.

We'll list venues that bring in entertainment from the ukulele world. We'll also provide you with information on ukulele festivals and other events world-wide.

You can visit a simple website that will list all the issues we publish in a downloadable PDF file that will look just like a printed magazine. That means no invasive advertisements, no popups, no spam, just ukulele news, reviews, and information you can use.

[www.tricornpublications.com / ukulele\\_player.htm](http://www.tricornpublications.com/ukulele_player.htm)

-- Mickey Maguire, publisher

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## presenting... Craig Robertson

There are some people that were born to be performers and musicians. They seem to be in their element on stage and at the microphone. This issue's artist spotlight features one such individual.

I had the pleasure of attending one of Craig Robertson's shows and, indeed, it was a pleasure.

Craig Robertson is not just a ukulele player. He is a singer, a tune-smith, a lyricist, and an artist. From the moment he takes the stage 'til the lights go down, Craig is putting on a show.

There is more to playing music and singing songs than many people realize. A successful performer is one that is confident, comfortable, and can work the crowd. A live performance is really a collaboration between the listening audience and the performing artist, and Craig fully understands that.

Watching Craig put on a show, I realized that he was a seasoned professional. He even made tuning his ukulele entertaining with his jokes and

banter with the audience.

The "live" experience cannot be captured adequately in video. You really have to be *there* to appreciate the interaction between the artist and the crowd. That is a very big part of the show and Craig handles the listening audience as well as anyone I've seen.

On stage, Craig is smooth and puts on a polished performance. He steps up to the microphone and briefly introduces himself, then into a song he goes. During the course of the night he will talk with the crowd and by the end of the show, you are left wanting more. That's a sign of a true performing artist.



At the show I attended, Craig played ukulele. He plays a bunch of instruments and I'd love to see him perform with all of them on a single night, but I don't know if he ever does that sort of performance. On a ukulele, though, Craig exhibits superb technique as he sings and plays one of his stable of finely crafted instruments.

An artist spotlight would not be complete without an interview.

I asked Craig if I could interview him for this debut issue of **ukulele player** and he agreed to the interview.

**Note:** Most of our interviews are conducted via e-mail. This means that answers you see in the magazine are typically what was written in response to our questions with little editing.

**Q:** I've seen you perform and you put on a really great show. How long have you been performing music on stage?

**A:** I have a photo of myself onstage in a folk club in Los Angeles in 1966. EEK! I think I started performing a couple years before that.

**Q:** I know that you play guitar as well as ukulele. Which came first?

**A:** Guitar, definitely. I've only been playing ukulele for the last ten years or so. I love guitar, acoustic, electric or slide. It has a great voice.

**Note:** Craig plays a pretty mean slide guitar, let me tell you.



Craig Robertson Interview cont...

Q: I know you have several ukuleles, what are some of your favorites and why?

A: That's a tough question to answer, since I have so many custom ukuleles right now. My favorite ukuleles are the 14 inch scale Stewart LeDomino... but the ones I own have taken quite a beating from being played so much; so I don't play out with them any more.

For performing I mostly use custom made ukuleles, because they are more stable on stage and are able to take the rigors of performing. Some of the ones I'm playing right now are: The "Le Noir" soprano from Pete Howlett, Two "Josephines" from Kevin Crossett of Kepasa Ukuleles, a concert "Devil Mermaid" from Peter Hurney of Pohaku and a Dias reproduction from Dave Means of Glyph. I also occasionally play a 50s Gibson Tenor tuned to Bb on stage.

Q: How long was it before you started playing "live" with a ukulele?

A: I think I took it on stage about a year after I started playing it. Usually if I write a song on an instrument, I feel more comfortable doing the song on that instrument.

Q: On stage I have only seen you play soprano ukuleles. Is that your preference?

A: The LeDomino I prefer is actually a 14 inch scale, which

puts it somewhere between a soprano and a concert. I prefer the soprano size for its sweet voice. I have a tenor and a Harmony Baritone I play once in a while.

Q: You crafted an entire image, a stage persona, if you will, but it seems to be a part of the real Craig Robertson. Was there any design behind this or was it a natural progression?

A: Persona? What persona? Oh... THAT one. No, if you want to know the REAL reason I started playing ukulele... it was because the ukulele is a great accessory for my fedoras.

NOTE: Watching Craig perform on stage, and jamming with Craig off stage, I really do get the feeling that with him, what you see is what you get. Sure, there is an image that he projects, the vintage clothing, fedora, the ukulele, but that really does seem to be the REAL Craig. He is the living embodiment of an entertainer.

Q: You have a lot of musical talent and you really play the audience. Was that always a part of your act or did it take time to acquire that ability?

A: No way. It took a lot of performing before I was even halfway comfortable on stage. Everyone gets nervous about performing and everyone handles it differently. Some drink, some smoke, some re-block their hat... but everyone gets nervous. Doing it a lot makes you appear more comfortable with it!

Q: I think of you not just as Craig Robertson, the performer, you are an artist, sure enough, but you are also quite a songsmith. When did you first start writing songs? Did you start with a collaboration or just start on your own?

A: I can remember writing songs when I was 13 or so. I think it was because I was just too lazy to learn covers properly. It was always easier for me to make up something and just play it.

Also, I come from a poetry background. I used to write immense amounts of poetry. Still do sometimes. I was published in four or five small periodicals about twenty years ago. Shit, there's less money being a Poet than even a Musician!

Q: Ukulele Noir, the whole show has become very widely known in the ukulele world. How did the show begin?

A: A little over four years ago I was hosting an Open Mic at the Sky Bar in Somerville, Mass. I would get up and do a few songs on the ukulele and then a bunch of guys and girls with guitars would do their bit. The word got around, I guess, and area ukulele players like *jazz uke afficiendo* Mark Occhionero and Greg Hawkes of *The Cars* fame began showing up and playing. Not too long after that I suggested we have an "all ukulele" night. Ukulele Noir was the name I chose because I like Film Noir and my songs are pretty dark. After the first one I found that a lot of people

wanted to see it and I did it again and again...

Q: You mentioned that Greg Hawkes has been a special guest performing artist on the show, and, of course, Robert Wheeler. Who are some of the other artists that have performed on Ukulele Noir?

A: Cripes...most everyone who plays ukulele. From John King to Folk Uke. If you go to the Ukulele Noir website you can see some of the guest performers.

Q: Have you ever thought about doing a live album from Ukulele Noir?

A: It's been talked about, but, you know, I really like the "live performance" aspect of the show. If you're there, you'll see something you will never see again. You will hear it in a more conducive atmosphere. And you can drink.

Q: You have a new CD, tell me about it. What instruments are you playing on this one?

A: The new CD is called "DeChirico Street" and it comes out Dec. 7th 2008. thirteen songs, all mine. I actually played all the instruments on this one. Ukuleles, Bass guitar, acoustic guitar, slide guitar, lap steel, accordion and tambourine (can't forget that!)

Q: I've heard some of the songs performed "live" in Columbus, Ohio, how many songs are on the new CD and have any been on previous collections?

A: All 13 songs on this CD are new. None have ever been recorded before.

Q: So, what comes next?

A: More recording and a little traveling and touring.

Q: Ukulele has become so popular these days and performers are getting a lot more attention now. Do you see that as a disadvantage at times?

A: Only when the attention is not accompanied by money.

Q: Now that gasoline prices are dropping down to what they were several years ago, have you thought about touring a little farther from home, or is Ukulele Noir keeping you busy enough in Boston area?

A: I will be doing some traveling, and, if I have a Ukulele Noir, it will be with local players.



*Craig always puts on a great show. If you get the opportunity to see a live performance, don't pass it up.*

## NoirCity

Ukulele Noir has many regular performers and guest artists from the uke world. Here are a few of those:

Greg Hawkes  
of "The Cars"



Craig

Folk Uke  
Cathy Guthrie  
Amy Nelson



Mark  
Occhionero

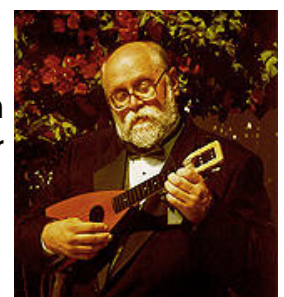


Fred Fallin



Robert Wheeler

Ukulele Man  
Tom Harker





## Waverly Street Ukes

I had the good fortune of meeting Dave Gjessing of Waverly Street Ukes at the very first meeting of the Columbus Ohio Ukulele Peeps (COUP) that I attended.

Jeff Fink, known on Ukulele Cosmos forum as "Juke Jeff" told me that Dave would be at the coming COUP gathering and have some of his ukuleles there. I was looking forward to meeting Dave and seeing his ukuleles first hand.

Dave has been a wood-crafter for a long time. He has a shop at home and spends a lot of time working at the bench when he is not running his computer software business. One of the assets of a computer programmer is being able to find creative solutions to complex problems. Typically, the simpler the fix, the better it works. Dave uses that same principle when building his ukuleles. He built his own forms and has created new and innovative ways of doing things.

Looking at Dave's ukes, I found some distinguishing features that I had not seen before. For one thing, the strings go through the bridge from inside out.

That makes it physically impossible for the bridge to pop off a Waverly Street Uke.

Another innovation is the way that Dave mounts the neck on his ukuleles. The body and neck appear to be seamlessly bonded and a hardwood fret-board sits above the neck. There is no binding on the neck or body. The headstock sports Dave's logo down by the nut.

At the nut, I found another innovation. Dave cuts a "V" shaped slot for each string to prevent buzzing so common in factory-made ukuleles.



I had a chance to sit down and talk with Dave about his ukuleles and how long he'd been building musical instruments, where he is headed with this and what we can expect to see down the road.

Q: How long have you been making ukuleles?

A: Since March of 2007.

Q: So why ukuleles?

A: I used to make Appalachian dulcimers, seventeen of them, actually. I got away from it for a time and hadn't made anything since the Mid Seventies. I made a couple of "box fiddles" too. I tried to play violin a little bit, not well enough for anyone to listen to. In the winter of 2006 I was sitting around and thought, it would be fun to have an instrument to play. I went over to Sam Ash Music and I saw ukuleles and I thought they were "cool looking" and I bought a "cheap" uke. The intonation was off and the frets were in the wrong place. Even so, I could go online to "Chordie" or some site like that and type in the name of a song, download the chords and just start playing.

Q: So you started playing ukuleles before you attempted building them?

A: Well, after my experience with the cheap ukulele from Sam Ash, I thought, "Why don't I try to build one." So I started working on making my own uke.

Q: So far, I have seen soprano ukes and long-necked



sopranos, a couple of pineapple ukuleles, banjo ukes (banjoleles), and the new "prim" inspired tear-drop shaped ukes, really cool, by the way, do you have any plans to make "concert" ukuleles?

A: Well, the "prim" ukes are concert-scale. I am in the process of making forms for standard shaped concert ukuleles. When the forms are ready I'll be able to make concert ukes in standard size and shape.

Q: Will you be making tenor ukuleles in the future as well?

A: The equipment I have right now is not large enough to make tenor or baritone ukes.

Q: You have been building ukuleles from Appalachian hardwoods, do you plan to build any ukuleles in exotic woods, like rosewood, mahogany, or koa?

A: I have thought about it, but, right now, my cost of materials is pretty affordable. If I bought exotic woods for ukuleles, their prices would have to be much higher. If you compare my prices to some of my competitors, you'd see that the real difference is material costs. I would have to sell my ukuleles for a lot more if I wanted to use exotic tone-woods. Right now, though, the price of my ukes compared with other luthiers is about the same for the "labor" involved, the difference is really the cost of materials.



prim-inspired ukulele



prim's maple back



banjo-uke  
a.k.a. "banjolele"

Q: How many ukuleles are you making per month?

A: If I build four at a time, I can complete three or four in a month, but, I am just doing this in my spare time at this point.

Q: How many instruments have you built in all?

A: About 70 instruments. Well, the seventeen dulcimers and the rest are ukuleles.

Q: I know that you have your ukulele plans for sale on your website. Is there interest in those? Are they selling?

A: Yes, actually, they are. I don't know if this means anything, but most of my buyers are from the UK. I have been selling oh, maybe one set of plans every three weeks or so.

Q: So what is the hardest part about making a ukulele?

A: Making the neck. I use a band saw and cut the basic shape. I trim it down. Then I use a rasp to curve the corners and shape it. Then I sand it smooth.

Q: How much time does it take to do all of that work?

A: I can make the neck in about two hours.

Q: Your set-ups are really great. I have been very impressed with every ukulele I've seen. They are all very playable and there are no buzzing strings. The intonation is great. Is there some neat little tool that you've created to get it this way?

A: Well, not really. I buy sets of files and I take one that is somewhat leaf-blade shaped and cut down its sides a bit so that the tip is triangular. I cut the string slots in the "nut" and after it is in place, I file down the string slots with that triangulated blade file so that the string sits in a little "V" shaped notch. That means it really can't buzz. I literally eyeball the strings and I finger chords to check string height. Then, I play test every ukulele to make sure it's perfect. I fine tune it at the end.

Q: You are experimenting with different techniques. The neck on this "prim" ukulele is really beautiful. What is so unique about what you are doing here?

A: I have build a lot of ukuleles with walnut fret-boards. Most makers are using rosewood or ebony. What I have done here is used tight-grained oak stained to look like ebony. The grain is very similar to ebony, in fact. Oak is a very hard wood with a similar grain, but, it is less expensive, being an Appalachian hardwood. The result is a beautiful fret-board that is very durable, fairly light, and every bit as beautiful as ebony.

Q: Start to finish, how long does it take you to build one ukulele?

A: It takes ten to twelve hours of labor to build one ukulele. The time it takes me to ship an order on a "commissioned" uke is about three weeks. I'd rather not sell that way, if given a choice. I like building them and putting them online for sale and selling

from that supply of finished units. It is easier that way. I do take requests for special builds, too, but selling from stock on hand is easier and faster. Buy one today, I'll ship right away.

Q: Having built ukuleles, banjoleles and prim-inspired instruments, do you anticipate trying your hand at guitars in the future?

A: No, guitars are really a lot different. You have much more bracing and lots of other differences in overall construction. My equipment is really made specifically for the size range I need to make ukuleles.

Q: Do you repair ukuleles and other instruments?

A: I do minor repairs. I reset a neck on a guitar not long ago. I have done a few repairs, but, building new instruments has kept me pretty busy.

Q: Have you planned building an acoustic-electric uke?

A: I put a little piezo mic I bought from Radio Shack in a ukulele to see what it would be like, but people told me that it sounded awful. It was tinny and sounded really bad. I haven't thought anymore about it.

Q: So, how many years experience do you have building musical instruments?

A: I have thirty-four years experience building dulcimers, box fiddles, and ukulele.





# Applause UAE20e

Kaman Corporation, the guys that make Ovation, Takemine, and Hamer guitars, produces the Applause ukulele UAE20e.

The UAE20e is a soprano uke with a small body and a big sound.

The model we review here has a matte black finish, twenty little "acoustic holes", crimson colored geared Grover tuners, a lyrachord rounded back, and passive electronics.

From the factory, the ukulele was supplied with clear GHS strings. The first thing we did was remove those and install Aquila Nylguts (imitation gutt nylon strings). That gave this little axe a louder voice unplugged, and a nice bright voice through the electronics.

The rosewood fretboard is nicely finished and sports pearl-like dots at the fifth, seventh, tenth, and twelfth frets. The frets are nicely dressed and there are no sharp edges.

Straight from the factory box the action was a little high. That is typical of most mass-produced ukuleles. That way, a player can have the action lowered to

best suit their own playing style and preferences.

I was very impressed with these ukuleles the first time I heard one played live. Ukulele Man, Tom Harker uses one and I watched him perform using this same model. His sounded great and so does this one.

This little uke is a tad heavier than most solid wood instruments, but, it is also rugged and can be taken almost anywhere without worry. It holds tune very well, even under adverse conditions. That may be attributed to the lyrachord back.

With a solid spruce top, this ukulele does put out more sound than some previous models made by Applause.

One big change in this model is the use of passive rather than active electronics. The benefit here is that you don't have to worry about changing batteries during a performance.

Without a screwdriver, the way this uke is constructed, you would not be able to change one anyway.

This ukulele was made for the stage. It has everything a performing musician needs at a very modest price. You can find one online between \$170 and \$180 dollars (US). I'd recommend a hard case to protect it. Something this sweet deserves a hardshell case.

Our recommendation is that if you gig, you need one of these. If you must have a wooden uke, well, you might be put off by this one, but, give it a try, you'll be glad you did.







<http://www.ukulelecosmos.com> - excitement, music, lively discussion, and a whole lot more...

# Martin S-0 Review

After abandoning the ukulele for many years Martin Guitar Company returned to the scene with the tiny S-0, based on the original vintage "0" style ukulele.

In the 1920s, Martin ukuleles were so popular that even Hawaiian players were all grabbing them. It seems that everywhere people were either playing a Martin or a knock-off of one.

The Martin "0" was brought to life anew in the "S-0", at least it would appear. The new S-0 is essentially built on the same plan as the original, but it is assembled in Mexico to save manufacturing costs.

If you are not familiar with it, the S-0 is a soprano ukulele built top to bottom from solid mahogany. The nut is Dupont Corian and the saddle is Micarta. It sports Gotoh friction tuners. This uke is fully spec'd with solid mahogany, even in the internal bracing.

You may have heard rumors that this little ukulele had some quality issues, if that is the case, by the time I got my hands on a few of them, those problems must have been resolved. I have played several now and

none of them had any issues that I could tell. I even bought one and played it for a year or two. I sold it to a musician who planned to use it on stage every now and then.

Martin must have enjoyed some success with the S-0, because they have since released a whole series of reproductions of previously designed "classic ukuleles" from the Golden Age of the uke in America.

One thing I can say for certain, the specimen that I have played all had wonderful fit and finish. They were boisterous little instruments, surprisingly so. They all had excellent intonation. I really wish that Martin had something similar to Aquila Nylgut strings. The S-0 sounded much better after I swapped the Martins that came on it with my choice of strings.

I bought one of the S-0 ukes from Sam Ash and they could not find the gig bag that is supposed to come with them. They gave me a Martin mandolin gig bag for it. While thickly padded, it did not fit as well as the one that should have been with it. Maybe Sam Ash worked out some deal to buy these ukuleles from Martin



sans gig bag. I don't know. They don't have gig bags for their Ovation Applause ukes, but their Flukes and Fleas all have gig bags.

If you ask many long-time players and collectors, they might tell you to buy a vintage "0" rather than the S-0, but, give one a try. You might really love it and for \$299, an all solid mahogany Martin uke is not a bad player and may even prove to be a good investment with the popularity of ukuleles increasing.

I have enjoyed every S-0 I've played thus far. You can find them at Sam Ash, Musician's Friend, Elderly Instruments, and other music stores online and in your neighborhood.



# Amber Nash

## singer-songwriter on the rise...

When you grow up surrounded by professional musicians and singers, like I did, you see and hear a lot. Stories of struggling artists and rags to riches tales are everywhere. Occasionally, you come across someone with an uncommon voice, someone that has star potential, Amber Nash is one of those people.



I met Amber in a very casual setting, just a gathering of ukulele players that assemble from time-to-time and play music for recreation and friendship. So, in walks Amber with a Fluke and a smile.

Music is one of my passions. As such, I find it a pleasure when I meet someone that just loves to sing and play. You know that sort of person by the smile that never seems to leave their face whether on stage or jamming.

Before I met Amber face-to-face, I saw a few of the videos that she posted on YouTube and heard some of her songs on MySpace. Oh, yes, this is one talented lady. Meeting her was a treat. Not only did she have a great voice, she has lots of energy and an endless supply of enthusiasm. What's even better is that she writes and performs original material, too.

I wanted to interview Amber for this issue of **ukulele player** because hers is a fresh young face emerging on the music scene and she is not far from where I live, in Columbus, Ohio. Amber is based in Cincinnati.

Cincinnati is a music town. There have been acts large and small since the early days of jazz and swing. What a great place for an up and coming artist to live and begin her career in the music business.

Q: Amber, I know that you are in Cincinnati and by day, you are a school teacher. After hours, you are Amber Nash, member of UkeBucket, ukulele player, and singer-songwriter.

A: Actually, I'm trying to get away from the "of ukebucket" part. ukebucket was more of a project between two long-time friends, Rikk Palmer and Barry Canfield. Right now I'm really just trying to focus on my solo stuff and meeting and playing with as many local musicians as I can.

Q: How long have you played ukulele?

A: I've been playing for about 4 years.

Q: I know that when we first met, you came to Mid Ohio to meet with "Columbus Ohio Ukulele Peeps" a.k.a. COUP. You brought a "Fluke" ukulele with you. Do you still play it?

A: I remember that first meeting! Having so many uke enthusiasts in one room was awesome! But yes, I'll still play my Fluke from time to time. Right now I'm letting a friend borrow it. I am spreading the uke love! I think Jumpin' Jim would be proud.

Q: You have a great voice. When did you first start singing?

A: Why, thank you! I guess I started singing in high school when I auditioned for the show choir. I was very much into theatre at the time and REALLY wanted to be in the choir. I remember I sang "Moon River."

I think that was my sophomore year of high school.

Q: When did you know that you wanted to play solo gigs before an audience?

A: Well, I've loved performing for a long time, pretty much since the 7th grade when I started in community theatre in Shelbyville, Indiana. But I've only since really gotten into playing solo original music. It's very strange. It's a much different feeling than performing with a cast in a play or even playing with others in a band. I like it. I hope to do more of it.

Q: I know that you'd love to have a career in music. Is there a particular genre that you favor?

A: I would definitely love to have a career in music, although my day job does have me spoiled a bit with that steady paycheck! You know, I've thought about the whole "genre" thing. I'm still not quite sure where I fall. I think that a label might have to come later. Right now I'm just writing what comes to me and I'm not really thinking about if it fits with a particular style. I guess I could be put in the "singer-songwriter" category.

Q: I know thus far, you have recorded a rather eclectic mix of tunes. Can we expect more of the same?

A: I hope so. I think if I marry myself to a certain style of music I'm going to feel too stifled. My personality is very eclectic, or so I've been told,

and my passions and interests change pretty frequently. I think it's only natural that my music reflects that.

Q: How many ukuleles do you now own? I know of the Fluke, a baritone, is there a concert uke in your stable? What else?

A: Right now I have a concert Pono, a Fluke, and a Regal baritone. I'd love to have more, but my bank account won't let me. I've been toying with the idea of getting a custom from Peter Hurney.

Q: Let's talk about your songs. I have heard "Canary in a Coal Mine" and "No Doz and Booze", how many other songs have you written?

A: I've probably written over 40 or so, what with Project 52, my work with ukebucket, and my current writing purge.

Q: Do you have any influences vocally? How about as a songwriter or ukulele player?

A: I listened to a lot of musical theatre growing up, so I'm sure that's had an impact. Julie Andrews was my hero when I was a kid, as well as Liza Minelli. Some Ella Fitzgerald has probably rubbed off on me along the way as well. I've been told I sound like Norah Jones, Sara McLachlan or Allison Krauss. As a songwriter, I think I just listen to a LOT of music. I keep an open ear, and hear what others are doing.

Sometimes when I feel that my lyrics are trite, I'll listen to a band

with pretty shallow lyrics but amazing music. I try to pull from lots of different places. As far as an influence regarding my ukulele playing... I'm afraid I'm not good enough for my influences to really take effect! But, I think the two that stand out in my mind are Victoria Vox and Craig Robertson. They write original music, stick to their guns, and do their own thing. Victoria is an inspiration as a female singer-songwriter and Craig is...well...pretty much just awesome.

Q: Tell me about ukebucket... How did it begin?

A: Ukebucket consists of myself, Rikk Palmer, and Barry Canfield. I've known Rikk forever. His mom was my kindergarten teacher and he was my brother's best friend growing up. We started playing music together after we did a show in Rushville, Indiana when we were both in high school. It was Jesus Christ Superstar; I was Mary Magdalene and he played electric guitar in the pit. We started writing songs then.

From then until we met Barry, which was early college, we just tinkered around, recorded (he majored in audio recording so it was great for both of us!), and wrote whatever popped into our heads. After meeting Barry and jamming more often, we decided to start working toward an "end product" to our time together. Gigging was never really mentioned... I think we just wanted something to show for all those years of playing together and making music. So



for the past year and a half or two years or so, we've been working on the album, sometimes steadily and sometimes... not steadily.

We recorded it in Orlando, Florida. As of now we're not really collaborating. The distance makes that pretty difficult. I wrote the songs, except for the last track, and Rikk and Barry added what they felt necessary. It was a really fun project.

Q: There are not many players that I have known in Cincinnati, is that changing?

A: Sadly, there are not a lot of ukulele musicians in Cincinnati, at least not ones that gig. There are a few, though, although none feature the uke full time (not that I know of).

I played a show with a group, Sara Songbird and the Moontoons, that played the uke on a couple of numbers. A friend of mine is just starting a band that uses it in a couple numbers as well, actually, they'll probably be using my Fluke. I think the word is spreading.

Q: So with UkeBucket being on hiatus, have you found another group?

A: Right now I don't have a "group". I've met some local musicians that I plan to play with, though, and something might come from that. I've got a duet thing going, and also possibly a trio female group with uke, percussion, and cello.

Q: Tell me a little about your collaboration work with Jodi Mathews, Dirty Little Secret. I know that you have done a few recordings and videos. Is there anything else planned?

A: Jodi's great. She's so fun to record with. I hope to do more videos, definitely. I believe I met Jodi through the Ukulele Cosmos (online forum).

Q: You have a video with a toy piano... who came up with that idea?

A: Well, I think Jodi just had it in her living room when I was there a while back. I remember getting really excited about it. I've always wanted a toy piano. I'm not sure who came up with the idea... probably Jodi. She's pretty creative.

Q: Rumor is that you are learning to play guitar. How is that coming? Will we hear any new recordings featuring guitar anytime soon?

A: I AM learning to play guitar! It's coming along nicely, although the guitar strings are a LOT harder on my fingers than the uke ones! I'm learning new chords bit by bit, though. I think the guitar is going to start popping up a lot more, maybe with some ukulele solos as well. The last two songs I've written have been on guitar.

Q: The kazoo on Canary in a Coal Mine, you really had me laughing. I watched the outtakes and they were really cute. Have you had a lot of comments about them?

A: Thanks! It was really hard to keep my cool... hence all the ridiculous outtakes. I have had a lot of comments about that video. Folks seem to like it when I play it live, as well. Although, I'm not able to do the kazoo part because I don't have a kazoo holder yet. I think this is the main reason why I need a roadie. Any takers?

Q: You did a cover of "The Way I Am" and it was really great! I think I was a fan at that point. Have you thought about writing some material with similar style?

A: That is a really great song. Ingrid Michaelson is also a singer-songwriter I respect and admire. I think that vocal style will come along in my music, sometime.

Q: So, what lies ahead?

A: I'm in the *very beginning* stages of a solo album. I'm figuring out my song list, writing new songs, and figuring out instrumentation and things like that. I don't really have a timeline for it, but I'll keep folks posted. I'm going to have my own website here in a month or so, so I'll hopefully start to promote things a little more through that. I'm really excited to enter the 2008 Bushman Ukulele World Video Contest. I'm going to collaborate with a couple of friends... so look for that. Generally, I think just playing out as much as I can and meeting musicians is my focus. I think that might open some doors for me, as well as doing interviews with kind and gracious folks like yourself!



# Special Feature Interview

## Alli Bee, Founder of Ukulele Cosmos

First, I'd like to take a moment to introduce Ukulele Cosmos to our readers.

Ukulele Cosmos is an Internet-based forum, a bulletin board, if you will, that is dedicated to all things ukulele. While other forums exist on the topic, Ukulele Cosmos is set apart from the others in many ways.

People can visit the forum and become part of the community of players from around the world. The participants contribute a lot by sharing techniques, video clips, audio recordings and lots of insight into playing and entertaining with ukuleles.

Thanks to the hard work of Alli, Cosmos has built relationships with the manufacturers of ukuleles, and local shops (based in the UK), and these relationships have enabled Alli to conduct special prize drawings and other events that keep people coming home to Cosmos for their ukulele fix.

Ukulele Cosmos is FREE to the readers and contains a wealth of information. Donations are accepted.

Q: "Alli Bee", you are the founder of Ukulele Cosmos. Tell me about how it all began. What was the incentive for creating a ukulele forum? How old is Cosmos, now?

A: It all began when I was very new to playing the ukulele. I was looking around online and found a few forums but they were all based in the USA. I needed to ask questions about how to get hold of decent ukes in the UK and wanted to make contact with other UK players in order to learn. I found Ray Shakeshaft's website ([www.ukuke.co.uk](http://www.ukuke.co.uk)) which was really informative and did put me in touch with other UK players, but the only thing it didn't have was a forum. I felt it would be beneficial for us UK players to have somewhere online where we could stay in constant contact. So, what started as something for UK uke players has grown into an international forum with new members from every corner of the planet signing up every day. The Cosmos will be four years old in July 2009. It was originally set up on a free site but that only lasted for about a year because we all got sick and

tired of the ads that regularly took over every post! In its current incarnation it has been active since July 2006

Q: So, why the name "Alli Bee"?

A: Well, my forename name is Allison and my surname starts with a 'B'. Like a lot of people using the internet I was cautious of giving my full name so I opted for 'Alli Bee'. Some of my friends in my day to day life call me that anyway so it fits nicely. Since becoming quite deeply involved with the ukulele community, and having been lucky enough that quite a few players I've met online have come to stay at my house here in Suffolk, my home is now referred to by some as "The Beehive". Quite nice I think. It conjures up an image of organised chaos, which anyone who has visited will tell you is an apt description of my life generally!

[Editor's Note: A large number of Cosmos members are from the USA and other countries. Cosmos does not show favoritism toward members in Great Britain. While it is based in the UK, it is totally impartial]

Q: Ukulele Cosmos has become "the place to be" online when it comes to ukulele forums. How long after you started did that happen?

A: It's very kind of you to say so! It started quite quickly. I knew a lot of people online already from various other forums and had help from some of them to set up the Cosmos as it is now, for which I am eternally grateful. So, a lot of people were there at the start but the membership has risen in line with the general rise in popularity of the instrument. I'm not sure that the current interest in the ukulele would have been quite so intense if it weren't for the internet though. There are several uke forums that have all helped to fuel the interest. I believe there is room for us all but the Cosmos is one of the very few that is not driven by commercial interests and has always been about the people that play ukuleles rather than simply an information site about the instrument. Of course, the wealth of knowledge that our members bring with them means there is rarely a question about the instrument that goes unanswered and the Cosmos goes way beyond the ukulele. People may start using it because they have that common bond but it soon changes into something much more sociable for a large proportion of the users. I think this is a great part of its popularity. So many of its members have met up in 'real life', both nationally and internationally, and there is a real feeling of camaraderie that

comes with that, twinned with the regularity that people pop in to catch up on the day's gossip!

Q: JukeJeff contacted me and told me to check out Cosmos, that's how I found it. Do most people find Cosmos by word of mouth, or do you advertise?

A: Word of mouth is probably the biggest form of referral, whether that be face to face or links via other websites. Internet search engines are next in line. I don't advertise the Cosmos as such although I did add it to the Wikipedia entry on ukuleles!

Q: I have seen a couple of promotional give-aways at Cosmos. The latest was an Ohana ukulele give-away. What other special raffles and give-aways have you had at Cosmos?

A: Oh yes, the Ohana give-away was great. The Ukulele Shop ([www.ukuleleshop.co.uk](http://www.ukuleleshop.co.uk)) approached me and asked if I'd do that. It helps promote businesses such as theirs and I'm happy to do that for people who are helpful, prompt and fair, and who go above and beyond just selling ukuleles. In return, the Cosmos members get to have a bit of fun. I don't tout for freebies - people approach me. Other give-aways have included several Makalas from Almuzo who is a Cosmos member and a wholesaler of ukes - these made their way to various winners around the world - and a silent Eleuke from MusicGuyMic ([http://stores.ebay.com/Musicguymics-](http://stores.ebay.com/Musicguymics-Room)

[Room](#)) who is one of the most helpful vendors out there. The only downside is that I can't put my name in the hat for these give-aways since I'm the one pulling the names out! In addition to the promoted give-aways there are also all kinds of swaps going on. I've given a banjo-uke to someone that wanted one and I've had some lovely ukes given to me by generous souls. Of course there is also the exchange of information from professional uke makers like Pete Howlett, to Arch Larizza sharing his technical knowledge. Every day is a give-away of some sort or another on the Cosmos. It may not always be a ukulele - sometimes it will be something as simple as showing someone how to play an "E" chord!

Q: How many members do you have now... ballpark figure?

A: 1500 and rising. Can someone please tell me how to eliminate spammers though? I must have deleted about 20,000 of them over the years.

[Editor's Note: You won't be plagued with spammers as a reader, Alli painstakingly removes them from the roster. Noone is able to post until they are officially approved as a member, thus preventing marketing and spam from porn sites - which are the vast majority of bogus sign-ups]

Q: When did you realize that you had such a big hit on your hands?



A: Ooh err.. it still doesn't really occur to me that the Cosmos is a 'big hit'. It is not something that I control in that respect. Its popularity is down to the users - without them it simply wouldn't exist! It is nice, though, when you meet people at various functions who have used it and appreciate it. We do have some quite well known public figures that use it incognito (and sometimes openly) - that's quite a buzz.

Q: You started a MySpace site for Cosmos, does it get a lot of traffic? Has it introduced new people to Cosmos itself?

A: It does get quite a lot of traffic. I'm sure it would get a lot more if I had the time to update it more regularly and yes, it has introduced new members to the Cosmos and has introduced me to some players I'd never have otherwise heard of. I am fairly thinly stretched as it is though and time is a luxury that I don't have a lot of. I didn't realise that the Cosmos would take off the way it has, and at the moment I am the only person involved in maintaining the sites. I'm fortunate enough to have a ukulele playing partner who is very patient and supportive of everything I do though so he takes the pressure off a bit.

Q: Do you have any idea what the median age is at Cosmos?

A: No. But I'd hazard a guess that it's about 36. The youngest member that I know of is about 18 and the oldest is in their seventies. It's hard to tell though

since most people don't let on how old they are. Perhaps I should start a poll?

Q: How about the median number of years playing ukulele?

A: Again, not everyone mentions it but I'd say, from what I've seen, most people have been playing for 5 years or less. Rufus Yells (aka Uncle Rufus and Gibson uke fanatic) is probably the member with the most mileage in this respect!

Q: Has anyone asked what the ratio is of male to female Cosmos members? Do you know that ratio?

A: Well, without getting too scientific I would say that the ratio is at least 40 men to 1 woman (not bad eh girls?). I'm not sure if this is partly based on the male users being more talkative or if the female players are shy! Not everyone has a gender specific user name and unless they state whether or not they are male or female then I can't tell. I can feel yet another poll happening.

Q: How many hits a day do you get?

A: It varies and it depends on your definition of hits. If we have a give-away or if our Open Invitational (a monthly virtual open mic where each performer does their own version of a well known song) is about to be announced then the traffic booms. If it's Christmas Day or Thanksgiving then it tends to be much

quieter. On average we get about 70,000 hits per day according to the stats, but a lot of those will be spambots. Our most frequent visitors are from the USA closely followed by the UK, France, Australia, Holland, Sweden, Germany, Japan, Canada, Ireland, Italy and others. So, despite being based in the UK, you can see how international it really is.

Q: I have seen more than a few times when people really get uptight and fights occur. I know that you have resisted the temptation to filter things, have you any regrets on that?

A: No, none whatsoever. I took the decision to be light handed in moderation after considerable thought. There are other forums that are quite strict with this aspect but I feel that moderation is a form of censorship. Someone said recently that moderating too much is like telling people that they can play music but only in the major scale. I agree with this. I also feel that the members of the Cosmos are adults who are capable of having heated debates (extremely heated sometimes) but will always work it out in the end. This has been proven time and time again and to my knowledge only a handful of people have found this too much to bear. It is certainly a very delicate balancing act though as people have different thresholds when it comes to sense of humour etc. At the end of the day, the Cosmos is not a forum for kids and I make this very clear. At the same

time, however, it is not a den of iniquity. If you like it then stick around and you will be made very welcome. If you don't then you have free choice to leave. I am pleased to say that very few people choose the latter option though and fierce disagreements are rare when you put them in the context of all the good that comes out of the Cosmos.

Q: How long have you been playing ukulele?

A: I have been playing the ukulele for about four and a half years.

Q: What events do you attend in the ukulele world? Do you have a Cosmos booth or official presence or is it just a casual attendance for you?

A: I have been lucky enough to attend various uke events. At one end of the spectrum I have been to The Ukulele Society of GB's ([www.usgb.co.uk](http://www.usgb.co.uk)) Digswell meeting, which has traditionally been the bastion of George Formby fans (although more recently it has attracted a wider audience), and tipping the scales at the other end was New York's Ukulele Cabaret which is run by Jason and Ted of <http://ukuleledisco.com>, which couldn't be further away both demographically and in terms of performances! In 2007 I flew to the New York Ukulele Festival where I met many wonderful people, including plenty of Cosmos members, and was fortunate enough to be in the audience of performers such as "The

Moonlighters", Craig Robertson, Bosko & Honey and "Hot Time Harv's Rollercoaster of Kicks". So memorable for so many reasons!

I have participated in Ukulele Wednesdays held every week in The George pub, Soho, London and regularly perform with a bunch of local musicians who form part of a ukulele club here in my hometown. Next year I will be organising the UK Ukefest in July at Hollesley, Suffolk which is something that grows and grows each year. Ray Shakeshaft has organised this for the past few years but I think he'd like to sit back and enjoy it next year. We already have some fantastic performers lined up so make a date in your diary and look for more information as it comes up on the Cosmos nearer the time. I never attend these things on anything other than a casual basis and there is no Ukulele Cosmos booth. I don't feel the need for one since it is a not-for-profit activity. I just really enjoy spending time with other players.

Q: Do you have any future plans for Cosmos you'd like to share? How about Alli, the ukulele player, any personal goals?

A: Well, there is a Ukulele Cosmos YouTube space in the works. It is up but I am trying to decide what direction to go in with it. I think that it will be some kind of video-diary bringing people up to date on all things uke. Similar to an information website, only in video format. I'd like to include visits to my place by fellow uke players,

coverage of the UK Ukefest and that kind of thing. Finding the time to do it is another matter.

On a more personal level I'd like to find the time again to teach the ukulele to children. That was a very rewarding job but one that I could only do before I went back to full time work. For now I am happy to play the ukulele and sing with my friends while continuing to enjoy it all. The day it becomes a chore is the day to step back but I don't see that happening anytime soon.

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I'd like to thank Alli Bee for this interview and also for her ongoing effort and upkeep of Ukulele Cosmos.

Alli gives a lot of time to the Ukulele Cosmos and also to cultivating relationships with groups in the UK and elsewhere. Sites like hers are not easy to maintain and the more successful they become, the harder it is to keep everything running nicely.

Cosmos has helped to build the current popularity of the ukulele by becoming a valuable resource to players from around the globe.

Thank you, Allison (Alli Bee), for all of your hard work and perseverance with Cosmos.

<http://www.ukulelecosmos.com> should be on every ukulele player's list of "favorites" (or bookmarks, if you prefer).



# Behringer 1202 Mixer

At some point, it seems that every musician wants to make a recording. That used to mean booking recording studio time. With the introduction of lightweight "home studio" gear, average musicians can make a pretty nice demo right in their own living-room.

If you have tried home recording equipment and were not impressed with the results, chances are good that it is one

of two things, either you have bad microphones, or you really need better control of your incoming signal. In the former case, buying good microphones is an investment in your music craft. In the latter, you can get a pre-amp, but a better solution is a mixing board.

Behringer, a company based in the Germany, makes low-cost products to serve the needs of

professional and amateur musicians alike.

The UB1202 Mixer uses 4580 Op Amps to control amplification and has a 3-band EQ on every channel to give you great tone and very low noise. It features XLR and 1/4 inch jacks to allow professional and dynamic mic use, and it has 48v phantom power.

This tiny board gives you big performance. There is 130 db dynamic range and 60 db gain on the volume controls. This mean you get excellent control and lots of power behind it.

You get much better results using a project mixer like the UB1202 when you record. Sure, it is possible to just grab a portable recording unit, plug into it and start playing, but with a mixing board you get the same sort of results professional recording engineers can give you.

What is nice about the Behringer UB1202 is that you can find it in most popular music store chains and also several big online stores, like Sam Ash or Musician's Friend and it is under \$100, a great investment for your performance gain.

If you buy a 4-track recorder, a mixing board will allow you to easily record more than one instrument at a time. We highly recommend the UB1202 for your home recording needs, and if you want to use it for gigs, it is great on stage, too. A great value, a great price.







# Ukulele Club Listings...

If you would like to list your club here, submit contact information at this website:

[http://www.tricornpublications.com/uke\\_player.htm](http://www.tricornpublications.com/uke_player.htm)

or e-mail me at this address:

[mickey@tricornpublications.com](mailto:mickey@tricornpublications.com)

We will add you to our list.

## USA

### California

#### Nuked Ukes

We are in Auburn California. Welcoming players from all levels.

contact: Loyce Smallwood

[loy@foothill.net](mailto:loy@foothill.net)

[www.kahi.com/loyce'sblog](http://www.kahi.com/loyce'sblog)

### Kansas (and Western Missouri)

#### Kansas City Ukesters

<http://www.kcuke.com>

### New Mexico

#### The High Desert Sand Fleas

Meet the 2nd & 4th Thursday of each month at the

Albuquerque Press Club [6pm - 9pm]

2101 Highland Park Circle

Albuquerque, New Mexico - USA

contact: Stephen Hunt

email: [hdsfgcea@gmail.com](mailto:hdsfgcea@gmail.com).

<http://sites.google.com/site/hdsfgcea/>

### Ohio

#### COUP (Central Ohio Ukulele Peeps)

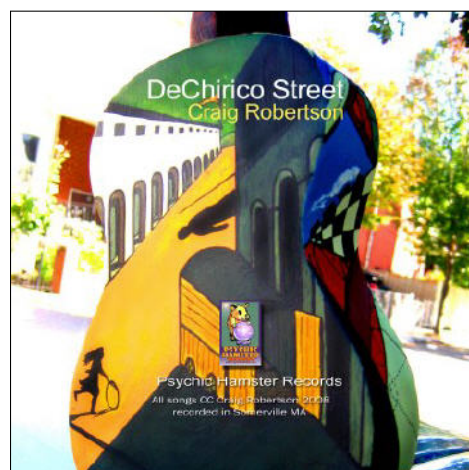
[coup@tricornpublications.com](mailto:coup@tricornpublications.com)



<http://www.wsukes.com>



<http://www.ukulelenoir.com/>



<http://psychichamster.com/>

# Ukulele Clubs continued

## Texas

Robert S. Sparkman  
[sparky.judy@tx.rr.com](mailto:sparky.judy@tx.rr.com)

**Lone Star Ukulele Club (in North Dallas)**  
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/lonestarukuleles>

**The Dallas Ukulele Headquarters**  
Go to [www.meetup.com](http://www.meetup.com) and search The Dallas Ukulele Headquarters to join the group. Lots of fun events and jams!

## Vermont

**Vermont Ukulele Society**  
email: [vyhnak@sover.net](mailto:vyhnak@sover.net)  
Meets on the second and fourth Mondays of each month.

## Washington

**Seattle Ukulele Players Association (SUPA)**  
[www.seattleukulele.org/](http://www.seattleukulele.org/)

## UK

### England

**Ukulele Society of Great Britain**  
43 Finstock Road, London W10 6LU  
Tel: 020 8960 0459  
Email: [m@gicman.com](mailto:m@gicman.com)

**Cambridge Ukulele Co-operative [Cuckoo]**  
Meet alternate Sundays 2pm-6pm  
The Portland Arms Cambridge CB4 3BAIf  
you're cuckoo about ukes come and join us.  
<http://www.myspace.com/cambridgeukuleleclub>

**Ukulele Philharmonic Orchestra of Sudbury**  
Tuesdays evenings from 7.00pm  
The Institute, Station Road, Sudbury Suffolk CO10 2SP  
Beginners Welcome

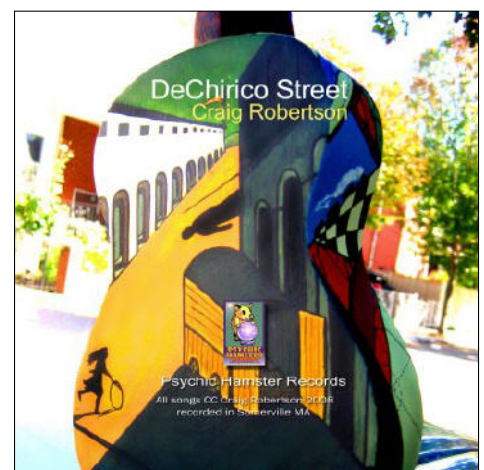
**Uke Wednesday Jam**  
Every Wednesday 7 till closing  
Downstairs @ The Royal George  
Charing Cross Road, London, WC2H 0EA, U.K.  
contact: Quinc  
email: [qnc@qnctv.com](mailto:qnc@qnctv.com)  
<http://ukeweds.intodit.com>



<http://www.wsukes.com>



<http://www.ukulelenoir.com/>



<http://psychichamster.com/>

# Ukulele Clubs continued

## **SCUPA - Second City Ukulele Players Association**

Venue: The Camp Inn, 1 Camp Lane, Kings Norton, Birmingham  
West Midlands B38 8SP

Details: We meet weekly on Tuesdays at 7:30pm in the upstairs room.

## **Whickham & District Social Club**

Simonside View, Whickham, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE16 4AQ.

We meet every 2nd Wednesday 7:30 PM to 9:30 PM.

<http://tunearmy.blogspot.com/>

## **Ireland**

### **UKULELE IRELAND**

[ukulele@ireland.com](mailto:ukulele@ireland.com)

Irish ukulele club meets on the second saturday of each month. Players from all over Ireland. Ukeplayers of all levels welcome. If you are a visiting uke player please feel free to come along. The meetups are held at 2, eden park, Dunlaoire, Co. Dublin

## **Germany**

### **Ukulele Club of Germany**

[info@ukulelenclub.de](mailto:info@ukulelenclub.de)

[www.ukulelenclub.de](http://www.ukulelenclub.de) (home page)

[www.ukulelenboard.de](http://www.ukulelenboard.de) (message board)



Making beautiful music is your passion, helping you do it is ours.





## USA

### Lone Star Ukulele Festival

dates are 4/30-5/2 in Dallas

UkeLadyMusic and The Dallas Ukulele Headquarters are organizing the event.  
more information coming soon.

### UK Ukefest

July 24th, 25th, 26th, 27th 2009

Run Cottage

Hollesley

Suffolk IP12 3RQ

more information available soon on

[www.ukulelecosmos.com/phpBB2/index.php](http://www.ukulelecosmos.com/phpBB2/index.php)



<http://www.ukulelenoir.com/>



## Essential Links from the World-Wide-Web

**UkeTalk** - <http://uketalk.com/links.html>

"Ukulele Spoken Here" is one phrase that comes to mind. If you want to talk ukulele or catch all the news that is news, this is a can't miss website.

**Brudda Bu's Ukulele Heaven**

<http://www.geocities.com/~ukulele/index.html>

If you'd like to learn the history of some of ukulele's greatest players, this site is absolutely essential.

**Ukulelia** - <http://www.ukulelia.com/>

The World's Greatest Ukulele WebLog" Need I say more?

**Ukulele Cosmos** - <http://www.ukulelecosmos.com>

One of the hottest ukulele forums on the web. Don't Miss It!

**Ukulele Underground**

<http://www.ukuleleunderground.com/forum/index.php>

Another really popular ukulele forum, lots of Hawaiian players and folks from the West Coast of the Mainland USA.

**Flea Market Music** - <http://www.fleamarketmusic.com/default.asp>

This is Jumpin' Jim Beloff's website. He has lots of great resources and an excellent forum as well. You can buy Flukes and Fleas there, too. Jim also has lots of songbooks, DVDs, and other great stuff there for all of you ukulele enthusiasts.

**UkeLadyMusic** - <http://www.ukeladymusic.com/>

Auntie Noel runs a really great shop. Her passion is ukulele and it shows. ontact Us: phone 214-924-0408 or email [noel.tardy@yahoo.com](mailto:noel.tardy@yahoo.com)



Making beautiful music is your passion, helping you do it is ours.

# Online Resources Continued...

## **Kiwi Ukulele**

New Zealand's Ukulele Companion

<http://www.kiwiukulele.co.nz/>

## **Bounty Music**

<http://www.ukes.com/>

Brick & Mortar location in the Hawaiian Islands serving you:  
open 9 :00 to 6:00 Monday thru Saturday \* Sunday 10:00 to 4:00

## **Bounty Music Maui**

111 Hana Hwy. #105

Kahului, Maui, HI 96732

Phone: (808) 871-1141

Fax: (808) 871-1138



Making beautiful music is your passion, helping you do it is ours.